

# **Comparing the role of positive leader behaviours for perceptions of workplace relational civility under different norms for respect**

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## Abstract

Workplace incivility – in the form of disrespect, rudeness and/or discourteousness at work is ubiquitous, proving very costly to both individuals and organisations. Despite this, very few studies have taken a preventive approach to the workplace incivility epidemic by exploring ways of promoting the positive side, i.e., *civility*, at work. The purpose of this study was to investigate positive leader behaviours (those associated with transformational leadership and ethical leadership) as an antecedent of workplace relational *civility* and explore the moderating effect of employee perceptions of norms for respect on these relationships. 181 full-time workers completed an online survey at one time-point assessing perceptions of their current manager/supervisors transformational and ethical leader behaviours, perceptions of norms for respect at work, and perceptions of workplace relational *civility*. Results indicate that transformational leadership, ethical leadership, and norms for respect all positively and significantly relate to workplace relational civility. Employee perceptions of norms for respect positively moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and workplace relational *civility*, but not the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace relational civility. Findings suggest that positive leader behaviours are important for fostering relational *civility* at work, complementing existing incivility literature. Organisations are encouraged to work to improve relational civility at work by enhancing their managers and/or supervisors positive leader behaviours and improving employee perceptions of norms for respect at work.

## **Comparing the role of positive leader behaviours for perceptions of workplace relational civility under different norms for respect**

It is becoming increasingly acknowledged that interactions characterised by disrespect, rudeness and discourteousness are plaguing contemporary organisations (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Porath & Pearson, 2009). In fact, workplace incivility is ubiquitous – research has indicated that a staggering 99% of the workforce has witnessed instances of incivility in the workplace and 96% of the workforce have directly experienced incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Porath & Pearson, 2009) – and the cost of incivility to individuals and organisations is substantial (see Cortina, Magley, Williams & Langhout, 2001; Estes & Wang, 2008; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Porath & Pearson, 2009). Porath and Pearson (2010) reported that of those on the receiving end of workplace incivility 47% intentionally decreased their time spent at work, 78% reported a decline in organisational commitment, and a staggering 12% left their job as a direct result of uncivil treatment. Additionally, creativity, performance, and team spirit declined as a result of experiencing and/or witnessing uncivil interactions in the workplace (Pearson & Porath, 2005; Porath & Pearson, 2009). Furthermore, it has been suggested that for many organisations the cost of incivility could be in the millions, with an estimation of \$14,000 spent per employee as a result of incivility (Porath & Pearson, 2013). The consequences of workplace incivility to individuals and organisations highlight how critical it is to focus on reducing instances of workplace incivility and fostering positive relationships, i.e., *civility*, at work.

Contemporary organisational psychology literature has primarily focused attention on workplace incivility, its antecedents (see Blau & Andersson, 2005; Bureau, Gagné, Morin & Mageau, 2017; Harold & Holtz, 2015; van Jaarsveld, Walker, & Skarlicki, 2010), and its consequences (see Cortina et al., 2001; Oz, Zheng & Chen, 2018; Lim & Lee, 2008; Pearson,

Andersson, & Porath, 2000; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001). One of the most well established antecedents of incivility, explored in the literature, is leadership. Positive leader behaviours (i.e. behaviours associated with ethical leadership, charismatic leadership, and transformational leadership) have been found to negatively relate to experiences of incivility (Bureau et al. 2017; Taylor & Pattie, 2014; Walsh, Lee, Jensen, McGonagle & Samnani, 2018) and deviance in workgroups (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes & Salvador, 2009), indicating that leadership may be an important predictor of uncivil experiences at work.

Based on the prevalence of workplace incivility and its outcomes, it is evident that there is a need for more courtesy and respect within workplaces. Despite this, few studies have gone beyond exploring and analysing the negative impact of workplace incivility to focus on *civility* (for exceptions see Di Fabio & Gori, 2016; Di Fabio et al., 2016).

Workplaces that experience high rates of civility have more positive individual (*i.e.* increased job satisfaction, decreased burnout, increased organisational commitment) and organisational outcomes (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Leiter, Day, Oore & Spence Laschinger, 2012; Leiter, Laschinger, Day & Oore, 2011; Porath & Pearson, 2009). To help foster these positive outcomes through preventive interventions it is critical to explore, analyse and understand the antecedents of *civility*.

The current study seeks to address the gap in the incivility literature by taking a more prevention-based approach and exploring workplace *civility*. It is suggested that certain positive leader behaviours are negatively related to workplace incivility (see Bureau et al., 2017; Taylor & Pattie, 2014; Walsh et al., 2018) but it is currently not known what leadership behaviours predict workplace *civility*. By continuing to investigate incivility an opportunity is missed to investigate the relationship between positive leader behaviours and courtesy and respect in the workplace. Investigating this relationship is critical because it can provide

useful information for designing and implementing primary interventions for the sole purpose of increasing respect, courtesy and politeness in the workplace. Consequently, the aim of this study is to explore the relationship between positive leader behaviours (in this case, those associated with transformational leadership and ethical leadership) and workplace relational *civility*, under different individual perceptions of norms for workplace respect. By investigating the moderating role of individual norms for respect we can understand the conditions of the strength of the relationship between employees' perceptions of positive leader behaviours and workplace relational *civility*. Understanding these conditions allows for more tailored primary interventions for different organisations and individuals and gives a better insight into the antecedents of workplace relational *civility*.

### **Workplace Relational Civility: A brief overview**

Various scholars have defined civility – all definitions include showing respect for others, being courteous, and recognising the rights of others (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Carter, 1998; Elias, 1982; Di Fabio & Gori, 2016; Di Fabio et al., 2016). Di Fabio and Gori (2016) propose that as the interactions between people increase in frequency and complexity, the need for civility increases. This proposal led them to develop and operationalise the construct “relational civility” (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Relational civility is dynamic and can be altered to reflect the different spheres of life (i.e. relational civility at home, work, university). Relational civility is characterised by interpersonal sensitivity; kindness toward others; concern and respect for others and the self; and personal education (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016; Di Fabio et al., 2016). Relational civility includes behaviours such as facilitating productive and peaceful cohabitation by understanding social norms, and treating people with dignity (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016; Di Fabio et al., 2016). Treating others with respect and dignity in an organisational context is critical to foster harmonious workplace interactions, especially as contemporary working relationships can be complex.

Workplace relational civility is built upon Blustein's (2011) relational theory of working, which posits that working is inherently relational. Due to the relational nature of working, it is critical that optimal conditions are created to develop positive relationships at work (Blustein, 2011; Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Workplace relational civility is comprised of three interrelated dimensions – relational decency, relational culture, and relational readiness (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Relational decency refers to optimal relational functioning that ensures positive and decent interpersonal relationships (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Relational decency is characterised by respect for others and the self, assertiveness, freedom of expression, and the ability to be considerate towards others (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Relational culture differs widely across cultures and recognises the complexity of human relationships and the influence culture has on relationships (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Relational culture is characterised by the ability to utilise diversity management to communicate kindly, politely and courteously (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Relational readiness refers to the ability in which individuals can internalise the feelings of others and transfer that into proactive sensibility (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). Relational readiness is characterised by compassion, empathy and attention to others' reactions (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016). These three dimensions of relational civility are critical for fostering and developing effective workplace relationships (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016; Di Fabio et al., 2016). In line with other definitions of civility (see Andersson & Pearson, 1999) relational civility involves being polite, having regard for others, displaying concern, and being kind to others.

Relational civility at work is critical as the quality of working relationships is associated with various positive individual and organisational outcomes, including the quality of one's work and meaningfulness of one's work. (Blustein, 2011; Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016; Porath, Gerbasi & Schorch, 2015). Di Fabio et al. (2016) report that workplace relational civility is positively related to well-being and acceptance of change – after controlling for



personality traits. This suggests that relationships characterised by dignity and respect at work can help foster well-being and welcoming changes in the workplace (Di Fabio et al., 2016). Further, Porath et al. (2015) report that individuals who perceive an employee as civil are more likely to go to them for work advice and view them as a leader, both of which mediated the relationship between civility and performance over time. Although more research is needed to further explore the relationship between workplace relational civility and outcome variables (i.e. turnover, presenteeism, absenteeism, performance), in the literature it is clear that workplace civility yields positive organisational and individual outcomes. Conversely, currently no known research has explored antecedents of workplace relational civility. Research on prosocial constructs similar to workplace relational civility (i.e. organisational citizenship behaviour; OCB) has highlighted leadership as an important antecedent for prosocial workplace behaviour (see Malingumu, Kuenzi & Greenbaum, 2016). Understanding the antecedents of workplace relational civility is crucial as it provides information that can be utilized by prevention interventions to in order to increase and promote *civility* at work rather than just minimise *incivility* at work. The current article seeks to go beyond exploring ways to reduce uncivil interactions in the workplace by examining leadership and its role as an antecedent of workplace relational *civility*.

### **Transformational Leadership and Workplace Relational Civility**

Leadership is an important factor that influences followers' emotions, attitudes and behaviours (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pearce & Sims, 2002). Ethical leadership and transformational leadership are two values-based, positive, leadership models that have been found to positively relate to various prosocial workplace behaviours (see Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Brown & Treviño, 2006; Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005; Nejati & Shafaei, 2018; Zhu & Akhtar, 2014). Social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) proposes that individuals learn the correct way to behave by interacting socially with others. Social

learning theory is built upon the concept that learning is a cognitive process that occurs within a social context (Bandura, 1986). Almost all learning that results from direct experience can vicariously occur via observation of other people's behaviour and the consequences of such behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Individuals are more likely to model observed behaviour if it is seen to elicit a rewarding outcome rather than a negative outcome (Bandura, 1986). A individual observing others experience consequences (punishments or rewards) for their behaviour works in a similar way to an individual directly experiencing the same consequences (Bandura, 1986). In an organisational setting, employees acquire cues from their leaders to form their cognition, which shapes their behaviour (Bandura, 1986; Brown et al. 2005; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Individuals in the workplace observe and encode the behaviour of their leaders and learn new patterns of behaviour, cognitive competences, and standards for judgment (Bandura, 1986; Brown et al. 2005; Wood & Bandura, 1989) – making managers and/or supervisors important role models for social learning at work.

Leaders that model transformational behaviours have the ability to become trusted, admired and respected role models who are attentive to their followers needs, encourage innovation in their followers, and inspire transcendence from personal interests (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformational leadership consists of four interrelated elements: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Idealised influence encompasses the degree to which a leader acts in an admirable way which causes followers to identify with the leader (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Inspirational motivation includes the leader's ability to articulate a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Individualised consideration refers to the leader attending to followers' needs, acting as a mentor for followers, and listening to the needs and concerns that their followers may

have (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Intellectual stimulation is the degree to which leaders encourage creativity in followers, challenge assumptions, and take risks (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Taken together, these four elements of transformational leadership emphasise the collective identity of a workgroup; motivates employees to connect with organisational goals and vision beyond their own self-interest; and installs trust and harmony within the workgroup (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Transformational leadership was chosen as a possible antecedent variable of workplace relational civility due to the widespread agreement in the literature that transformational leaders model positive leader behaviours that are critical for fostering positive employee and organisational outcomes (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). Previous research has found that transformational leadership is positively related to proactive behaviour (Griffin, Parker & Mason, 2010; Strauss, Griffin & Rafferty, 2009), emotional intelligence (Brown & Reilly, 2008), organisational citizenship behaviours (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Bommer, 1996), occupational safety (Barling, Loughlin & Kelloway, 2002), innovation (Eisenbeiss, van Knippenberg & Boerner, 2008) and team performance (Zhang, Cao & Tjosvold, 2011). Furthermore, transformational leadership strongly effects followers' commitment their organisations and their attitudes (Bass & Riggio, 2005). Previous studies have also found transformational leadership to be negatively related to incivility (Bureau et al. 2017; Taylor & Pattie, 2014). Due to these linear relationships, there is potential that leaders who model transformational behaviours may encourage more relational civility within their workplaces, as a result of social learning. Considering moral consequences, instilling pride in employees, going beyond self-interests, and building strong relationships are examples of behaviours that transformational leaders engage in – making them trusted, admired, and respected by followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2005). As per the social learning theory, (Bandura, 1986) modelling transformational behaviours associated

with respectfulness, honesty, and courteousness are expected to elicit similar behaviours in followers, leading to relational civility amongst subordinates. Built upon the social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) the following is hypothesized about the information conveyed to employees from transformational leadership behaviours:

*Hypothesis 1: Transformational leadership will be positively related to workplace relational civility (H1)*

### **Ethical Leadership and Workplace Relational Civility**

Brown et al. (2005) report strong positive correlations between transformational leadership and ethical leadership, suggesting these two leadership frameworks share similar leader characteristics. Given these shared characteristics this study seeks to explore whether these two leadership styles have similar relationships with workplace relational civility, or if one leadership style has a stronger relationship with workplace relational civility than the other. Brown et al. (2005) distinguishes ethical leadership from other values-based leadership models (specifically the idealised influence and consideration aspects of transformational leadership) due to its explicit transactional approach to rewarding (and punishing) subordinate's ethical (or unethical) behaviour. When developing ethical leadership as a construct Brown et al. (2005) conceptualised ethical leadership by explicitly using Bandura's (1986) theory of social learning. A critical proposition of the social learning theory is that individuals can learn by being rewarded and/or punished for their own behaviours *or* by watching others being rewarded and/or punished for certain behaviours (vicarious learning; see Bandura, 1977, 1986). The former refers to how ethical leaders explicitly use reward or punishment to hold employees accountable for ethical conduct. If an employee is punished for engaging in unethical behaviour (*i.e.* incivility) or rewarded for engaging in ethical behaviour (*i.e.* civility) they are more likely to adjust their behaviour appropriately (Bandura, 1986; Brown et al. 2005; Taylor & Pattie, 2014). The latter, refers to how individuals learn

vicariously by observing those around them. For example, employees can learn whether certain unethical behaviours (*i.e.* incivility) are acceptable or not by witnessing or hearing about the rewards or consequences (or lack of) that other subordinates have received from their leader when engaging in such behaviours.

Ethical leadership refers to leaders who exhibit normatively appropriate conduct in their own personal actions and during their interactions with others at work (Brown & Treviño, 2006). In addition, ethical leaders promote appropriate conduct to their subordinates during two-way conversations, when making decisions, and by reinforcement (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Anderson and Sun (2017) propose that an ethical leader is a moral person (honest, trustworthy, fair); a moral role model (seen as an attractive role model who practises what they preach); and a moral manager (explicitly employs ethics as part of their leadership strategy and holds employees accountable for ethical behaviour through contingent reward).

Ethical leadership was chosen as the second antecedent of workplace relational civility as it has been found to relate to pro-social behaviour, employee voice behaviour and organisational citizenship behaviour (Anderson & Sun, 2017). Previous research has found that ethical leadership is related to various prosocial outcomes, such as employee moral judgements (Resick, Hargia, Shao & Dust, 2013) and organisational citizenship behaviours (Piccolo, Greenbaum, Den Hartog & Folger, 2010). Moreover, ethical leadership has been found to negative relate counterproductive workplace behaviours, such as workplace deviance (Mayer et al. 2009) and employee misconduct (Mayer, Kuenzi & Greenbaum, 2010). Discipling violations of ethical standard, making fair decisions, and setting ethical standards are examples of behaviours that ethical leaders engage in, making them exemplary role models of ethical conduct in the workplace. Ethical leaders who reinforce civil behaviour, punish uncivil behaviour and role model ethical behaviour, are likely to set vicarious learning environments and are expected to elicit similar behaviours in followers –

leading to relational civility amongst subordinates. Based upon empirical research and the information that ethical leaders will convey to their employees, through social learning theory, the following is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 2: Ethical leadership will be positively related to workplace relational civility (H2)*

Taylor and Pattie (2014) reported that leaders who role model ethical behaviour had employees that were less likely to engage in uncivil behaviours in comparison to those who only model transformational leader behaviours. In comparison to ethical leadership (which has a direct transactional approach to addressing ethical conduct in the workplace) transformational leadership does not explicitly put emphasis on shaping ethical transactions. Because of the transactional relationship between ethical leaders and their employees, based upon the social learning theory, the current study proposes the following:

*Hypothesis 3: Ethical leadership will be a stronger predictor of workplace relational civility than transformational leadership (H3)*

### **Employee perceptions of norms for respect and workplace relational civility**

In organisational psychology literature, social norms have been explicitly linked to workplace incivility and civility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson et al. 2000, 2005). Social norms are not explicit documented policies or procedures within an organisation (Morrison, 2006). Instead, they act as implicit rules that serve as a guide of how members of the organisation should act and behave (Fiske, Rosenblum & Travis, 2009; Walsh et al. 2012). Although social norms are implicit and informal, research has found that norms can influence workplace attitudes (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007) and behaviour (Hackman, 1976; Walsh et al., 2018). Employee social norms can arise as a result of interactions with customers, supervisors or co-workers, critical events, primacy, or carry-over behaviours from

past situations (Feldman, 1984).

Although implicit, norms have been found to elicit certain behaviour and attitudes. For example, Bommer, Miles & Stevens (2003) reported that employees displayed higher organisational citizenship behaviours when their co-workers also displayed these behaviours. Furthermore, Walker, van Jaarsveld & Skarlicki (2014) found that employees who experienced customer incivility responded by engaging in incivility. This empirical evidence supports the theoretical proposal that employees tend to act in accordance to their norms (created by supervisors, co-workers, critical events, primacy, or carry-over behaviours) and that norms affect employee experiences, behaviours, and attitudes (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Feldman, 1984; Pearson et al. 2000; Walsh et al. 2018). Based on the above information, it is likely that norms play an important role in individuals attitudes and behaviours at work.

Various scholars have sought to explore and understand contextual factors that promote respectful and civil behaviour. For example it has been suggested that a climate of formality (*i.e.* tight, deliberate modes of conduct) and a climate for respect may lead to more civility (or less incivility) (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Pearson et al. 2000, 2005; Walsh et al. 2012). In fact, Andersson and Pearson (1999) define civility at work as behaviour that upholds norms for respect at work. It is critical to note that although norms are an “expectation of how one ought to act” (Kerr, 1983, p. 33), there is a distinction between *internalised personal* norms and *shared social* norms (Kane & Montgomery, 1998). While Andersson and Pearson (1999) posit that there is a shared moral understanding of mutual respect in organisations that allow for co-operation, research by Montgomery, Kane and Vance (2004) suggest that norms should not be treated as a defining workplace characteristic (*e.g.* shared moral understanding amongst all in an organisation), instead, individuals within a workplace *may* vary in their personal norms for respect as extra-organisational experiences

(*i.e.* contact with social groups outside of work) may shape internalised personal norms.

Keeping this in mind, workplace norms for respect are employee personal perceptions of the degree to which respect and dignity is encouraged and disrespect and rude behaviour is discouraged, corrected or frowned upon within their organisation/workgroup (Hackman, 1992; Walsh et al. 2012).

Although studies have investigated the relationship between perceived workplace norms for respect and incivility (see Walsh et al. 2018), no study has investigated the relationship between perceived norms for respect and workplace relational *civility*. The current study, therefore, aims to investigate the relationship between employees perceptions of the norms for respect in their workplace and workplace relational civility (*i.e.* how others treat them, and how they treat others). If disrespectful behaviour is criticised, punished or rejected and respectful behaviour is applauded, rewarded or accepted, employees may form an action-outcome association (Walsh et al. 2018; Vroom, 1964). Furthermore, if rudeness and angry outbursts are not tolerated and respect is epitomised, one would expect employees to engage in civil behaviour themselves – as a result of them acting in accordance to their individual norm perceptions (Feldman, 1984; Hackman, 1992; Walsh et al. 2012). Previous studies have suggested that when individuals perceive the organisational climate to value respectful treatment and discourage rude behaviour, employees will be less likely to experience uncivil treatment as organisational members tend to act according to their norm perceptions (Walsh et al., 2018). Based on the theoretical link between employee norms for respect and civility (see Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Pearson et al. 2000, 2005), and empirical evidence that social norms affect behaviour and attitudes (Bommer et al. 2003; Walker et al. 2014), the current study hypothesises the following:

*Hypothesis 4: Employee perceived norms for respect will be positively related to workplace relational civility.*



### **The moderating role of employee perceived norms for respect**

Although positive leader behaviour is hypothesised to positively relate to workplace relational civility, this relationship may be influenced by individuals' perceptions of norms for respect (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Pearson et al. 2000, 2005). Positive norms for respect are said to help sustain civil behaviour amongst employees (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Pearson et al. 2000, 2005). Previous research has explored norms for respect as a mediator between positive leader behaviours (behaviours associated with ethical and charismatic leadership) and experiences of workplace incivility and found that norms for respect acts as a mediator between positive leader behaviours and experiences of workplace incivility (Walsh et al. 2018). The mediating effect of norms for respect on the relationship between positive leader behaviours (charismatic and ethical leadership) and workplace relational civility is plausible, however, the current study focuses on moderation because there are many other variables that may give rise to employee perceptions of norms for respect (see Feldman, 1984). More specifically, it may be that individual norms for respect exist within an organisation but they exist independently to leader behaviours – for example norms for respect may be shaped by extra-organisational social groups (Kane & Montgomery, 1998; Montgomery et al., 2004).

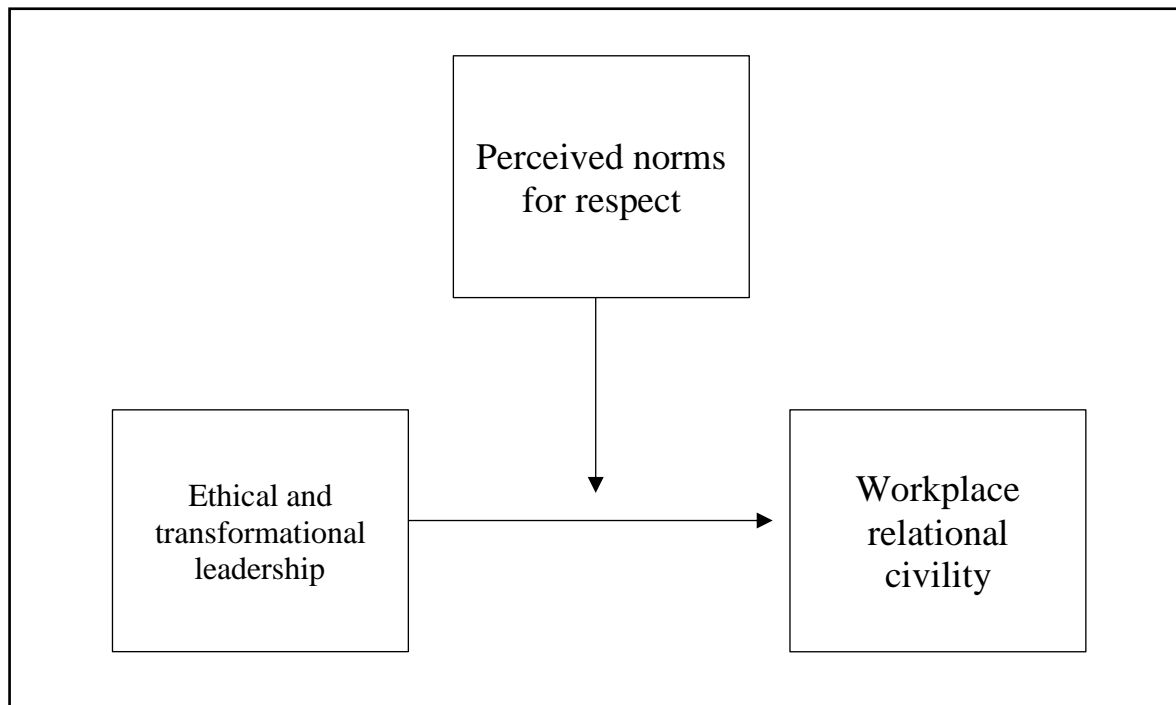


Figure 1. *The hypothesised model between positive leader behaviours (ethical and transformational leadership) and workplace relational civility, with perceived norms for respect as a moderator.*

Figure 1 shows the hypothesised relationship between positive leader behaviour and workplace relational civility with perceived norms for respect acting as the moderator of the model. Firstly, positive leader behaviours (behaviours associated with transformational and ethical leadership), via social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), are expected to positively relate to workplace relational civility. Secondly, the model suggests that individuals perceived norms for respect at work moderates the relationship between positive leader behaviours (behaviours associated with transformational and ethical leadership) and workplace relational civility. When the level of individual perceived norms for respect is higher, the relationship between leadership and civility is stronger. More specifically, individuals perceived norms for respect at work are expected to reinforce and boost the ‘relational civility-inducing’ role of positive leader behaviour.

We propose that individual perceptions of norms for respect is a positive moderator of

the relationship between positive leader behaviours (those associated with ethical and transformational leadership) and workplace relational civility, because of the theoretical framework that suggests workplace civility is enacted within workplace norms for respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) and because behavioural norms serve as criteria to which individuals judge and make decisions on how to act and behave (Rousseau, 1990; Walsh et al. 2018). To conclude, we argue that employees positive perceptions of norms for respect will be positively related to workplace relational civility and will moderate the relationship between positive leader behaviours (ethical and transformational leadership) and workplace relational civility and propose the following:

*Hypothesis 5: Perceived norms for respect will positively moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and workplace relational civility (H5a) and ethical leadership and workplace relational civility (H5b), under the condition that when perceived norms for respect are higher, the relationship between leadership and civility is stronger.*

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants for this study comprised of current, full-time workers over the age of 18. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants on online social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook. Participants were also asked to forward invitations to the study to friends, family and colleagues within their professional network, a form of snowball recruitment. As a result of this, the exact number of invitations sent to participants cannot be calculated.

A total of 181 people completed or partially completed the survey. After eliminating incomplete survey responses (using listwise deletion) the total number of participants was 137 – consisting of 79.6% females, 19.7% males, and 0.7% gender diverse. Of the 137 participants 83.2% identified as New Zealand European/Pākehā, 5.8% identified as Māori, 0.7% identified as Indian, and 10.2% identified as another ethnic group. The mean tenure working under current supervisor/manager was 3.03 years (SD 3.21), ranging from under one year to 19 years. The average age of participants was 33.07 (SD 12.66) ranging from 19 to 63.

### **Procedure**

This study employed a cross-sectional, self-report design. Data was collected at one time point using an advertisement posted on various social media platforms inviting people to participate in this study (see Appendix A) and send the link to others (friends, colleagues, family) to complete if they wished. Those that were interested clicked the link that re-directed them to Qualtrics – an online survey platform that hosted the survey. Those that followed the link were directed to an information sheet and consent form that outlined the objectives of the study, encouraging participants to set aside 10-15 minutes to voluntarily complete the survey

(see Appendix B). Participants were informed that the survey was anonymous and the research was reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics committee. Participants proceeded to complete the survey if they consented. In an effort to reduce common method variance each scale was presented on a different page as an attempt to temporally separate participants' responses to independent and dependent variables (See Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012; Spector, 2006).

Participation was incentivised by providing the opportunity to enter into a draw to win one of four \$50.00 supermarket vouchers upon completion of the survey. Participants who wished to enter the prize draw were redirected to a separate webpage to enter their contact email. This personal information was only used for the prize draw and responses could not be linked to individuals to ensure anonymity. In total, the survey was open for six weeks to ensure adequate recruitment time.

## **Measures**

Participants' perceptions of their manager/supervisors ethical leadership, perceptions of their manager/supervisors transformational leadership, perceptions of norms for respect at work, perceptions of workplace relational civility, and perceived role overload were measured in the survey using Likert scales (see appendix C for full survey, with the exception of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire which cannot be included due to copyright restrictions). The only demographics collected in the survey were age, gender, ethnicity, and tenure working under current supervisor.

### *Ethical Leadership*

The Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown et al. 2005) was used to measure employee perceptions of their supervisor and/or managers ethical leadership behaviour at work. The Ethical Leadership Scale is comprised of 10 items and is rated on a 5-point Likert Scale

(1=*Strongly disagree*; 2=*Disagree*; 3=*Neither agree nor disagree*; 4=*Agree*; 5=*Strongly agree*). Participants are asked to describe how each of the 10 statements reflect their current supervisor (or manager) and sample items include “my current manager/supervisor discusses business ethics or values with employees” and “my current manager/supervisor listens to what employees have to say”. The Ethical Leadership Scale exhibits excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .92$  (Toor and Ofori, 2009).

### *Transformational leadership*

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio & Bass, 2004) was used to measure employee perceptions of their supervisor and/or managers’ transformational leadership behaviour at work. The Transformational Leadership section of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire comprises five dimensions: idealised influence (attributes), idealised influence (behaviours), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Following Avolio and Bass (2004) recommendations these dimensions were grouped together to assess transformational leadership as an overarching construct. The Transformational Leadership section of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire consists of 20 items measured on a 5-Point Likert scale (0=*Not at all*; 1=*Once in a while*, 2=*Sometimes*; 3=*Fairly often*; 4=*Frequently, if not always*). The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was used with the authorisation of Mind Garden and the requirements of copyright have been satisfied. Participants are asked to rate how often their manager/supervisor engages each behaviour and a sample item is “the person I am rating.. talks optimistically about the future”<sup>1</sup>. The Transformational Leadership Scale exhibits very good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .86$  (Bass and Avolio, 1996)

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### *Workplace Relational Civility*

The Workplace Relational Civility Scale (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016) was used to measure relational civility in the workplace and is comprised of three dimensions: relational readiness at work, relational culture at work, and relational decency at work. The Workplace Relational Civility Scale is a self-report mirror measure that consists of 26 items. The first 13 items measures relational civility from one's own perspective (part A) and the second 13 items measures relational civility from the perspective of others (part B). The sum of the scores on part A and B gives the total score for workplace relational civility. Participants were asked to describe their relationship with others at work over the past three months (part A), and describe their perception of others' relationship at work with them over the past three months (part B). The Relational Civility Scale is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*Not at all*; 2=*A little*; 3=*Somewhat*; 4=*A lot*; 5=*A great deal*). An example item from part A is "I was sensitive about the difficulties of others". An example item from part B is "Others were sensitive about my difficulties". Di Fabio and Gori (2016) reported the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  as 0.87 and 0.92, for part A and B respectively.

### *Perceived norms for respect*

The Civility Norms Questionnaire-Brief (CNQ-B; Walsh et al. 2012) was used to measure participants perceptions of the norms for respect in their workplace. The CNQ-B consists of four items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1=*Strongly disagree*; 2=*Disagree*; 3=*Somewhat disagree*; 4=*Neither agree nor disagree*; 5=*Somewhat agree*; 6=*Agree*; 7=*Strongly agree*). Participants are asked to rate how much they agree with each of the four statements. An example of an item in the CNQ-B is "Respectful treatment is the norm in your unit/workgroup". The CNQ-B exhibits adequate internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .78 to .87 (Walsh et al. 2012).

### *Control Variables*

*Role Overload.* Role overload occurs when an employees workload and time pressures inhibits their ability to perform their job effectively (Kahn et al., 1964). Examples of role overload include having unachievable deadlines, insufficient time to complete work, excessive work quantities and managing multiple tasks at once (Cooper, Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll & O'Driscoll, 2001). Role overload was chosen as a control variable due to its empirical positive relationship with workplace mistreatment (Hoel & Salin, 2003; Rousseau, Eddleston, Patel & Kellermanns, 2014). Theory and research suggest that information and role overload can result in time pressures that can lead to increased workplace mistreatment and bullying (Hoel & Salin, 2003; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Rouseeau et al. 2014; Salin, 2003). In contrast, it has been found that role clarity and role facilitation is related to prosocial workplace behaviours (OCBs; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000; Yadav & Rangnekar, 2016). Based on these two findings, role overload will be controlled for in the regression analyses to explore its relationship with workplace relational civility. Role Overload was measured using a scale proposed by Cousins, Mackay, Clarke, Kelly & McCaig (2004) and includes eight items measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1=*Strongly disagree*; 2=*Disagree*; 3=*Somewhat disagree*; 4=*Neither agree nor disagree*; 5=*Somewhat agree*; 6=*Agree*; 7=*Strongly agree*). Participants are asked to rate how much they agree with the eight statements and an example of an item from the role overload scale is "I am pressured to work long hours". The role overload scale exhibits adequate internal consistency with a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$  (Huang, 2017).

*Gender.* Previous research has found that women are more likely to experience workplace incivility than men (Zurbrügg & Miner, 2016). However, no study has explored the influence of gender on workplace civility. Previous incivility and civility research suggest that there may gender effects. Gender was measured by the question "What is your gender?"



(1=male, 2=female, 3=gender diverse). A dummy variable was created for gender (female=0, male=1) in order for it to be included in the regression analysis. Gender diverse was entered as a missing value.

*Age.* Age was included as control variable as the literature suggests that age may have an effect on workplace relational civility as a result of generational differences in norm perceptions of appropriate workplace behaviour (Andersson and Pearson, 1999). Age was collected by asking participants for their birth year (YYYY), which was recoded to their age in years.

## **Results**

### **Exploratory Factor Analyses**

All scales were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis to assess dimensionality. Principal axis factoring with a direct oblimin rotation (oblique), to allow for correlations between factors, was used in SPSS. Factors that had an eigenvalue greater than 1 were extracted. The criteria adopted for retaining an item in a scale was a factor loading of above 0.4 on one factor and below 0.4 on all other factors (DeVellis, 2017; Hinkin et al. 1997). All exploratory factor analysis tables (including rotated factor loadings, communalities, eigenvalues, and percentage of variance explained) can be found in Appendix D.

The Ethical Leadership Scale loaded onto one factor, as expected. Factor one had a total eigenvalue of 5.82 and explained 58.2% of the variance. All items had factor loadings above .4 and were retained (see Appendix D, table 1). The Ethical Leadership Scale produced excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ .

Three factors were extracted from the Transformational Leadership Scale. Item 4 was removed due to not meeting the .4 factor loading cut-off (see Appendix D, table 2) and the analysis was re-run. After removing item 4 a one factor solution was extracted that had a total

eigenvalue of 10.63 and explained 55.93% of the variance. All items had factor loadings above .4 and were retained (see Appendix D, table 3). A single predictor variable of Transformational Leadership was used in further analysis in line with other researchers (e.g. van Beveren et al., 2017; Carless, 1998; Pillai, Schriesheim & Williams, 1999; Tepper & Percy, 1994) who used a unidimensional global measure rather than individual subdimensions – due to the subdimensions being highly correlated. The Transformational Leadership Scale produced excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .96$ .

Dimensionality of Part A and B of the Workplace Relational Civility Scale were analysed separately as per Di Fabio & Gori (2016). Three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted from Part A (me with others). Item 3 was removed due to not meeting the .4 factor loading cut-off (see Appendix D, table 4). After removing item 3 a three factor solution was extracted. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 5.27 and explained 43.89% of the variance, the second factor had an eigenvalue of 1.22 and explained 10.20% of the variance, the third factor had an eigenvalue of .70 and explained 5.87% of the variance. All items had factor loadings above .4 and were retained (see Appendix D, table 5). However, the three factors were found to be moderately correlated (.49, .51, .56) so the decision was made to treat Part A as unidimensional. Workplace Relational Civility part A produced excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$

Two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted from Part B of the Workplace Relational Civility Scale. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 7.19 and explained 55.31% of the variance and the second factor had an eigenvalue of .90 and explained 6.91% of the variance. All items had factor loadings above .4 and were retained (see Appendix D, table 6). The two factors were found to be highly correlated (.71) so the decision was made to treat Part B as unidimensional. Workplace Relational Civility B produced excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$ . As per Di Fabio & Gori (2016) part A and part B will

be combined and used as a single predictor of workplace relational civility in further analyses.

The Perceived Norms for Respect Scale loaded onto one factor, as expected. Factor one had a total eigenvalue of 2.55 and explained 63.7% of the variance. All items had factor loadings above .4 and were retained (see Appendix D, table 7). The Perceived Norms for Respect Scale produced good internal consistency with a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ .

The Role Overload Scale loaded onto one factor, as expected. Item 3 and 4 were removed due to not meeting the .4 factor loading cut-off (see Appendix D, table 8). After removing item 3 and 4 factor one had a total eigenvalue of 3.27 and explained 54.6% of the variance (see Appendix D, table 9). The Role Overload Scale produced good internal consistency with a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ .

## Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, and reliability coefficients for all variables can be seen in Table 1. As can be seen in Table 1, the Cronbachs alphas for all measures were above the minimum recommendation of .70 by Cronbach (1951) – indicating acceptable scale reliability. Ethnicity was not included in table 1 due to its multi-categorical nature.

Table 1  
*Means, standard deviations, correlations and internal consistency for all study variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Age	33.07	12.69	-						
2.Gender	0.80	0.40	.02	-					
3.Role Overload	3.91	1.46	<b>.26**</b>	-.03	(.88)				
4.Norms	5.41	1.34	.04	.05	<b>-.27**</b>	(.87)			
5.Transformational Leadership	2.88	.78	-.11	.04	<b>-.19*</b>	<b>.36**</b>	(.96)		
6.Ethical leadership	3.81	.87	-.06	.04	<b>-.21*</b>	<b>.40**</b>	<b>.75**</b>	(.93)	
7.Workplace Relational Civility	3.86	.55	.15	.05	<b>-.33**</b>	<b>.54**</b>	<b>.49**</b>	<b>.51**</b>	(.89/.94)

\* $p < 0.05$  \*\* $p < 0.01$  (two-tailed). Listwise  $N = 137$

Note. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) are displayed on the diagonal

## Hypothesis testing

To test all hypotheses a moderated multiple regression analysis was conducted. Ethnicity was not analysed due to its multi-categorical nature. To mitigate the possibility of high multi-collinearity with the interaction terms, index variables were created for all variables by using grand mean centering (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998) and two interaction terms were created for ethical leadership and norms for respect (*ethical leadershipXnorms*) and transformational leadership and norms for respect (*transformational leadershipXnorms*) (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003). In the first step, the control variables (age, gender, role overload), the predictors (ethical leadership and transformational leadership) and the moderator (norms for respect) were regressed onto workplace relational civility. The interaction terms (*ethical leadershipXnorms*, *transformational leadershipXnorms*) were added in the second step. Interaction terms that were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) were then plotted using the unstandardized coefficients (see Aiken, West & Reno, 1991; Dawson, 2014). Multicollinearity tests for the regression revealed acceptance tolerance and low variance inflation factor (VIF) levels, with all VIF values being below Bowerman & O'Connell's (1990) recommended cut off of 3. Meaning, the correlation between predictor variables are not high, which suggests that multicollinearity will not be problematic when interpreting estimations of regression coefficients.

### *Main effects*

Table 2 illustrates the results of the moderated regression analysis onto workplace relational civility. Transformational leadership was positively and significantly associated with workplace relational civility ( $B = .15, p = .04$ ), showing support for H1. Ethical leadership was significantly and positively associated with workplace relational civility ( $B = .12, p = .06$ ), at a less strict p-value criterion of .10, showing partial support for H2. These results suggest that ethical leadership is not a stronger predictor of workplace relational civility than

transformational leadership, which is contrary to H3. Norms for respect were positively and significantly associated with workplace relational civility ( $B=.14, p=.00$ ), showing support for H4. Role overload was negatively and significantly associated with workplace relational civility ( $B=-.07, p=.01$ ). No other significant main effects were found.

Table 2  
*Two-way moderated regression of all predictors onto workplace relational civility*

Variable	Workplace Relational Civility			
	B	SE	$\beta$	95% CI
<i>Step 1</i>				
Age	.01	.00	.12	[-.00, .01]
Gender	-.04	.09	-.03	[-.22, .14]
Role Overload	<b>-.07**</b>	.03	-.20	[-.13, -.02]
Ethical leadership	.12 <sub>+</sub>	.07	.19	[-.01, .25]
Transformational leadership	<b>.15*</b>	.07	.20	[.01, .29]
Norms	<b>.14**</b>	.03	.33	[.08, .20]
R <sub>2</sub> (adjusted)	.42			
<i>Step 2</i>				
Age	.01	.00	.11	[-.00, .01]
Gender	-.03	.09	-.02	[-.20, .15]
Role Overload	<b>-.07**</b>	.03	-.18	[-.12, -.17]
Ethical leadership	.10 <sub>+</sub>	.07	.17	[-.03, .23]
Transformational leadership	.14	.07	.20	[-.00, .28]
Norms	<b>.19**</b>	.04	.45	[.11, .27]
ethicalleadershipXnorms	-.04	.04	-.09	[-.12, .04]
transformationalleadershipXnorms	<b>.12*</b>	.05	.23	[.02, .21]
R <sub>2</sub> (adjusted)	.45			
R <sub>2</sub> (change)	<b>.03*</b>			

Note. listwise N=137,  $\beta$ =standardized coefficients

<sub>+</sub>  $p<0.1$ . \* $p<0.05$ . \*\* $p<0.01$

## 2-way interactions

Results suggest that transformational leadership positively interacted with norms for respect to predict workplace relational civility ( $B=.12, p=.01$ ). This is shown by a statistically significant model ( $R^2=.42, F(6,129)=17.56, p=.00$ ) with a significant  $R^2$  change ( $\Delta R^2=.03, F(2,127)=3.74, p=.03$ ) for the two-way interaction. These results show that the two-way interaction between transformational leadership and norms for respect explains 3.0% of

variance in workplace relational civility. Figure 2 shows the plotted interaction, which plots Workplace Relational Civility at high (+1SD) and low (-1SD) levels of transformational leadership. The results of this interaction show the relationship of transformational leadership on Workplace Relational Civility is stronger for people who experience higher norms for respect, showing support for H5a. The moderated regression analysis for ethical leadership and norms onto workplace relational civility was non-significant ( $B = -.04, p = .36$ ), suggesting that norms do not play a significant moderating role in predicting the effect of ethical leadership on workplace relational civility – contrary to H5b.

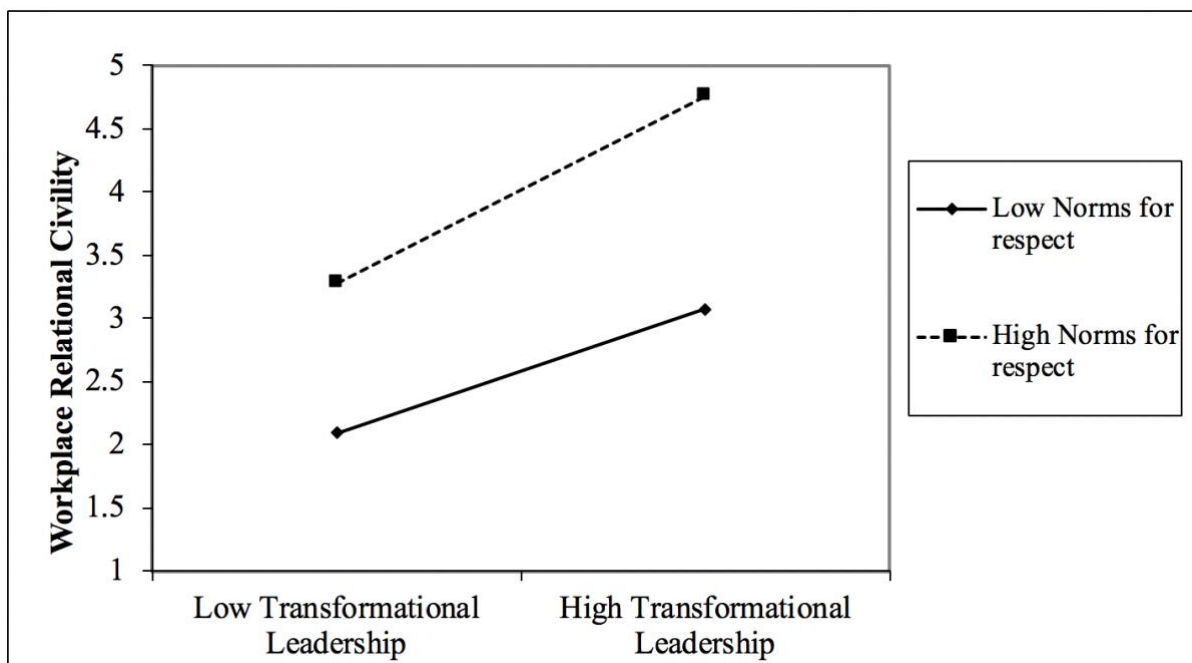


Figure 2. Interaction effect between transformational leadership and workplace relational civility, with a moderating effect of workplace norms for respect.

## Discussion

The cost of rudeness and discourteousness in the workplace is prodigious to both organisations and individuals, making it critical for organisations to foster workplace relations characterised by respect and dignity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2001; Estes & Wang, 2008; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Porath & Pearson, 2009).

Organisations that strive to foster workplace relations characterised by courtesy and respect have positive individual and organisational outcomes (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Leiter et al., 2011; Leiter et al., 2012; Porath & Pearson, 2009). In comparison to previous literature, the current study sought to take a more prevention-based approach to the workplace incivility plague by examining the positive leader behaviours as antecedents for workplace relational *civility*, with the hopes improve primary interventions aimed at tackling incivility and/or improving workplace civility. In doing so, the current study is the first known study to empirically explore the antecedents of workplace relational *civility*.

The current study utilised the social learning theory (Bandura, 1985) to investigate the relationship between positive leadership behaviours (those characterised by transformational and ethical leadership styles) and workplace relational civility. Furthermore, it sought to explore whether ethical leadership or transformational leadership best predicted workplace relational civility. The current study also investigated the relationship between employee perceptions of norms for respect in the workplace and workplace relational civility. Finally, it sought to analyse the moderating effect of workplace perceived norms for respect on the relationship between positive leadership behaviours (those characterised by transformational and ethical leadership) and workplace relational civility.

### Overall findings

The overall findings of the current study indicate that positive leader behaviours (in this case, behaviours associated with transformational leadership and ethical leadership) are

positively related to workplace reactional civility. This is consistent with previous research that has found transformational leadership (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Brown & Reilly, 2008; Eisenbeiss et al. 2008; Griffin et al. 2010; Podsakoff et al. 1996; Strauss et al. 2009; Zhang et al. 2011) and ethical leadership (Hargia et al. 2013; Piccolo et al. 2010) to be related to prosocial outcomes for individuals and organisations. This complements and adds to previous research conducted on workplace incivility that has found a negative relationship between positive leader behaviours and workplace incivility (Taylor & Pattie, 2014; Walsh et al. 2018). The current study also found that transformational leadership was a better predictor of workplace relational civility than ethical leadership which is contrary to previous incivility research (Taylor & Pattie, 2014). This inconsistency could suggest that the transactional nature of ethical leadership is more important than transformational leadership behaviours for reducing *uncivil* interactions in the workplace (by disciplining employees who violate workplace ethical standards) but not as critical for increasing *civil* interactions in the workplace (i.e. interactions characterised by dignity and respect in the workplace). This finding suggests that transformational behaviours such as instilling pride in employees, going beyond self-interests, and building strong relationships are more strongly connected to relational civility than ethical leadership behaviours.

Furthermore, results suggest that employee perceptions of norms for respect in the workplace are positively related to workplace relational civility. This is in line with previous research on norms that suggest people tend to behave and adopt attitudes in accordance to their norm perceptions (Feldman, 1984; Hackman, 1992). This finding adds to the previous incivility literature that found employee perception of norms for respect were negatively related to workplace incivility (Walsh et al. 2018). Furthermore, this provides some empirical evidence of a contextual factor (workplace norms for respect) that influences respectful and civil behaviour in the workplace (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Pearson et al. 2000, 2005).



Future studies may wish to seek to determine what specific factors contribute to individuals' perceptions of norms for respect at work and how norms for respect can be fostered.

Moreover, the current study found that norms for respect significantly moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and workplace relational civility. Although there was a main effect of transformational leadership and workplace relational civility, this main effect was qualified by an interaction between level of perceived norms for respect and transformational leadership. The relationship between transformational leadership and workplace relational civility was stronger when perceptions of norms for respect were higher, suggesting that norms for respect strengthen the civility-promoting aspects of transformational leader behaviours. Those who reported their managers/supervisors to have high transformational leadership behaviours and had high perceptions of norms for respect in their workplace experienced the most workplace relational civility. In comparison, those who reported their leaders to have low transformational leadership behaviours and had low perceptions of norms for respect in their workplace experienced the least workplace relational civility. This suggests that both transformational leadership and norms for respect are important for civility but it is important to consider 'relational civility-enhancing' role that individual perceptions of norms for respect plays on this relationship.

Although norms for respect moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and workplace relational civility no significant interaction was found between ethical leadership and norms for respect on workplace relational civility. This finding suggests that the relationship between ethical leadership and workplace relational civility is the same regardless of individual perceptions of norms for respect. Norms for respect are not important for this relationship – when also controlling for transformational leadership.

Finally, role overload was found to be negatively and significantly related to workplace relational civility. This finding suggests that employees who had jobs with

increased time pressures, unachievable deadlines, insufficient time to complete work and excessive work quantities were less likely to experience and/or enact workplace relational civility. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with previous research that linked role overload with workplace mistreatment (Hoel & Salin, 2003; Rousseau, Eddleston, Patel & Kellermanns, 2014). This finding complements previous incivility research which suggests that some employees who experience work/information overload and time pressures feel as though they have no time for politeness and niceties at work (Pearson et al. 2000). The effect of role overload on experiences of civility should be further explored as it could prove to have important theoretical and practical implications.

### **Practical and Theoretical Implications**

The current study has various practical and theoretical implications. Firstly, it highlighted the relationship between positive leader behaviours and workplace relational civility. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study that has explored any antecedents of workplace relational civility and has linked positive leader behaviours to workplace civility. Despite the rapidly growing literature on workplace incivility (Blau & Andersson, 2005; Bureau et al., 2017; Cortina et al., 2001; Harold & Holtz, 2015; Lim & Lee, 2008; Oz et al., 2018; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000; Pearson et al., 2001; van Jaarsveld et al. 2010) the mechanisms and antecedents of workplace civility remain under researched. The findings indicate that certain positive leader behaviours (those associated with transformational leadership) and employee perceptions of norms for respect are positively related to workplace relational civility. Our results add to the related body of literature by documenting the relationship between perceptions of positive leader behaviour, individual perceptions of norms for respect and workplace relational civility. This offers empirical evidence for existing theories presented in incivility literature that suggests leadership is an important factor in workplace civility (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Porath & Pearson,

2009) and adds norms for respect as an important variable that predicts workplace relational civility.

To expand this line of research in future studies other variables could be controlled for such as follower personality and character strengths (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004) which have been found to have implications for moral actions at work (see Taylor & Pattie 2014; Comer & Vega, 2011). Including such variables in future research will help to broaden understandings about the relationship between positive leader behaviours and workplace relational civility. Similarly, while our study found a relationship between transformational leadership and ethical leadership and workplace relational civility it would be interesting to see if the same holds true for other types of leadership styles (i.e. servant leadership, laissez-faire leadership, authentic leadership, abusive leadership). More importantly, future research may wish to investigate what specific aspects of leadership promotes workplace relational civility – perhaps it is something present in a particular value rather than leader behaviours.

The findings from the current study provide an opportunity for organisations to foster relational civility within their workplace, which is timely as between 96% and 99% of employees are exposed to or experience disrespect and rudeness at work (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Porath & Pearson, 2009). Firstly, organisations could educate and train their managers/supervisors to model positive leader behaviours. Research has suggested that both transformational (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Bass, 1990; Hawkins, 2017) and ethical (Brown et al. 2005; Sharma, Agrawal & Khandelwal, 2019) leader behaviours can be trained and developed. For example leaders could be educated on the meaning and importance of ethical conduct in the workplace or undertake team transformational leadership coaching (Hawkins, 2017). To take a preventative approach, when hiring managers and/or supervisors', candidates civility-promoting abilities and transformational leader behaviours could be measured and taken into account (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Furthermore, organisations should focus on helping develop norms that foster respect at work. Although this study focused specifically on individual norms for respect, attempting to create and align group norms for respect within a workplace is critical (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Pearson et al. 2000, 2005). Whilst individuals may vary in their perceptions of norms for respect at work – as a result of extra-organisational experiences, social groups, and personal characteristics (see Montgomery et al. 2004) – there are ways that workplaces can create shared norms for respect at work. One of the most effective ways to do this is at the socialisation and induction phase for newcomers (Wanous, 1992). Socialisation is a process for new employees that involves formal and informal learning about the nature of the work, and the organisational norms which new employees are integrating into (Wanous, 1992). Although norms tend to be formed implicitly, it is important that the socialisation process includes explicating the social and political norms for the organisation explicitly to newcomers and setting clear expectations for mutual respect (i.e. through verbalising what behaviour is accepted and unaccepted). Other recommendations to help improve the norms for respect at work for current employees are rewarding respectful behaviour, punishing disrespectful behaviour, creating dialogues about workplace respect, and ensuring leaders set good examples for mutual respect – in line with the social learning theory (Bandura, 1986).

### **Limitations and directions for future research**

Despite these implications and application, the current study is not without limitations which may need to be considered in future research. There are various methodological limitations of the current study that need to be taken into account when interpreting the results. One of the methodological limitations of the current study is the use of only self-report data, which can be susceptible to social desirability bias. Social desirability bias is the tendency for participants to answer in a way that will be viewed favourably by denying socially undesirable behaviours and admitting socially desirable behaviours (Chung &

Munroe, 2003; Podsakoff et al. 2012). For example, research has found that individuals tend to believe that they are more ethical than others (Fernandes & Randall, 1992). Social desirability bias could pose an issue to the entire survey, however, it may specifically effect responses to the *me with others* (RCS; see Appendix C) section of the workplace relational civility survey where participants are asked to rate their own ethical behaviour toward others. Future studies may wish to use a different measure of civility such as the newly developed Workplace Civility Index (see Clark, Sattler & Barbosa-Leiker, 2018) or include a measure of social desirability in their scale (see van de Mortel, 2008). Attempts were made to mitigate social desirability bias by assuring participants of the complete anonymity of their responses – which helps to reduce fears that responses may be seen by managers and linked back to them (Krumpal, 2013). Despite the possible impact of social desirability bias on survey research, self-report still remains the most appropriate way to measure the attitudes and beliefs of individuals that are not observable, justifying its use in this context (Brannick, Conway, Chan & Lance, 2010).

A further limitation was the cross-sectional nature of the study. As a result of measuring at one timepoint no inferences can be made about the stability or the causality of the models. Analyses cannot confirm the directionality of the relationships between the theorised predictor and outcome variables in the moderation analyses. Future studies may wish to adopt a longitudinal design to test the model over time and in various situations and to explore directionality. A second issue with cross-sectional data is its susceptibility to common method variance (Brannick et al. 2010; Podsakoff et al. 2003). Common method variance is variance that is attributed to the methodological approach rather than the constructs (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The current study uses data collected by a common source (self-report questionnaire), common rater, and a common measurement context which can cause method effects and inflations in correlations (Podsakoff et al. 2003; Spector, 2006).

These method effects include consistency motif, implicit theories and illusory correlations (Podsakoff et al. 2003). To reduce the effects of common method variance future studies may wish to use utilise a multi-source or multi-method data collection design. For example future studies may wish to collect perceptions of positive leader behaviour and civility from other sources (e.g. supervisors, co-workers). Collecting data from a second source (i.e. supervisors, co-workers) allows one to look at the convergence between sources. Finding convergence suggests that the self-report data reflects more than idiosyncratic opinions or impressions (Spector, 2019). Efforts were made to address common method bias by ensuring anonymity and attempting to temporally separate independent and dependent variables by presenting them on different pages (see Podsakoff et al. 2003). Despite the limitations of utilising a cross-sectional research design, the use of this design is justified as it is the most efficient way to investigate new areas of enquiry (Spector, 2019).

A third limitation was that the data was its sampling method. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling strategy where participants are selected ad-hoc based on their proximity and/or accessibility to the research (Jager, Putnick & Bornstein, 2017). This method of sampling lacks generalisability which can lead to estimation biases (Bornstein et al. 2013). Future studies may wish to conduct their research within organisations and randomly sample the organisations' population allowing for greater generalisations to be made. Furthermore, doing this would allow for the examination of mutual (or shared) norms for respect within organisations (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Montgomery et al. 2004). By determining the extent to which norms for respect are shared or individual within particular organisations could help to tailor programs that specifically targeting norms for respect.

## **Conclusion**

With incivility plaguing contemporary workplaces it is absolutely crucial that organisations work on fostering respectful work environments and relationships. This is the

first known study to examine any antecedent of workplace relational civility, making original and invaluable contributions theoretically and practically. The current study addresses a gap in the extant incivility literature, by taking a prevention-based approach and looking at ways to improve relational *civility* at work. The current study sought to investigate positive leader behaviour as an antecedent of workplace relational *civility*. Results suggest that positive individual norms for respect reinforce and boost the ‘civility-inducing’ role of leadership on workplace relational civility. To harness this effect organisations should strive to set clear expectations for workplace norms for respect at the beginning of employment (socialisation/induction) and beyond.

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## **Appendix A**

### Advertisement posted on social media platforms

**Kia Ora,**

My name is Georgia Payne and I am an Applied Psychology Masters student at the University of Canterbury. I am conducting research on the effects of leadership on social interactions in the workplace and hoping to recruit some participants to complete a short survey.

To be eligible to participate in this study you must be over the age of 18, be currently employed full time (not self-employed), and be fluent in English. If you choose to take part in this study your participation will include filling out a 10-15 minute survey. Participation is completely anonymous and voluntary and you can exit the survey at any time.

Participants who complete the entire survey will be eligible to enter into a draw to win one of four \$50 supermarket vouchers.

Clicking the link below will direct you to my survey and a consent sheet that will provide you with further information about the study.

*[link to Qualtrics survey]*

Thank you very much.

**Appendix B**  
Information Sheet and Consent form

**The effects of leadership on social interactions at work**  
Information Sheet for survey participants

My name is Georgia Payne and I am an Applied Psychology Masters student at the University of Canterbury. I am conducting research on the effects of leadership on social interactions in the workplace. The aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between various leadership behaviours in the workplace and how they relate to employee interactions.

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this study. **To participate you must be 18 years or older; be currently working full time; and be fluent in the English language.** Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty - you can do this by exiting the survey at any stage by closing the browser.

If you choose to take part in this study your participation will involve completing a survey, about your work experience, **which should take approximately 15-20 minutes.** Once you have pressed submit at the conclusion of the survey it will not be possible to remove your data, as it is anonymous, and there is no identifying information that can link your data to you.

After submitting your survey responses, you will be given the opportunity to enter your email if you wish to receive a copy of the report of the summary of the findings of the study or enter the prize draw. **Participants who complete the full survey will be eligible to enter a draw to win one of four \$50 supermarket vouchers by providing your email.** Any email that you provide will not be linked to any of the data you provide us with in the survey as it will be collected and stored in an entirely separate data file.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete anonymity of data gathered in this investigation. Data will be securely stored on the university servers in password protected files on password protected computers. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the raw data. Once the summary of the results have been sent out and the prize draw has been drawn the data file containing the emails will be immediately destroyed. After five years, all raw data will be destroyed. A thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.

This survey asks you about your social interactions at work. If at any stage during the survey you have any feelings of distress due to the nature of your social interactions at work, there are some places you can go for support including:

**Lifeline**  
0800543354  
[lifeline.org.nz/contact-us](https://lifeline.org.nz/contact-us)

**Worksafe**  
048977699  
[worksafe.govt.nz/contact-us](https://worksafe.govt.nz/contact-us)

**Mental health helpline**  
Text or call 1736

This project is being carried out as a requirement for the completion of my Masters in Applied Psychology. If you have any questions or concerns about this project or any cultural sensitivity issues that may arise as a result of this project I can be contacted at [georgia.payne@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:georgia.payne@pg.canterbury.ac.nz). Alternatively my supervisor, Katharina Naswall, can be contacted at [Katharina.naswall@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Katharina.naswall@canterbury.ac.nz) or +6433694332.

[This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz))]

**By clicking next I consent to participate in this study and start the survey**

## Appendix C

Full survey including all questions and response format (note. due to copyright the Transformational Leadership questions from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire are not included in this document).

### Workplace Relational Civility Scale

Di Fabio, A., & Gori, A. (2016). Assessing Workplace Relational Civility (WRC) with a new multidimensional “mirror” measure. *Frontiers in psychology*, 7, 890.

<i>“Please describe how you acted or behaved towards others (colleagues and/or supervisors) over the past three months”</i>				
0	1	2	3	4
Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
RCS1	I was able to express my values and beliefs calmly to others			
RCS2	I was able to express my point of view without being disrespectful toward others			
RCS3	I respected the opinions of others			
RCS4	I communicated my disagreement with others without being aggressive			
RCS5	I was polite toward others			
RCS6	I was generally kind toward others			
RCS7	I always behaved mannerly toward others			
RCS8	I made comments that valued others			
RCS9	I was interested in the emotional condition of others			
RCS10	I was sensitive about the difficulties of others			
RCS11	I realised the effect of my words on others			
RCS12	I was attentive to the needs of others			
RCS13	I easily recognised the feelings of others			
<i>“Please describe how others (colleagues and/or supervisors) acted or behaved towards you over the past three months”</i>				
0	1	2	3	4
Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
RCS1	Others were able to express their values and beliefs calmly to me			
RCS2	Others were able to express their point of view without being disrespectful toward me			
RCS3	Others respected my opinions			
RCS4	Others communicated their disagreement with me without being aggressive			
RCS5	Others were polite toward me			
RCS6	Others were generally kind toward me			
RCS7	Others behaved mannerly toward me			
RCS8	Others made comments that valued me			
RCS9	Others were interested in my emotional condition			
RCS10	Others were sensitive about my difficulties			
RCS11	Others realised the effect of their words on me			
RCS12	Others were attentive to my needs			
RCS13	Others easily recognised my feelings			

### Ethical Leadership Scale

Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 97(2), 117-134.

“Please describe how each of these statements reflect your current supervisor (or manager)”		1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
EL1	Conducts h/h personal life in an ethical manor					
EL2	Defines success not just by the results by also the way that they are obtained					
EL3	Listens to what employees have to say					
EL4	Disciplines employees who violate ethical standards					
EL5	Makes fair and balanced decisions					
EL6	Can be trusted					
EL7	Discusses business ethics or values with employees					
EL8	Sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics					
EL9	Has the best interests of employees in mind					
EL10	When making decisions asks “what is the right thing to do”					

### Perceived norms for respect

Walsh, B. M., Magley, V. J., Reeves, D. W., Davies-Schriels, K. A., Marmet, M. D., & Gallus, J. A. (2012). Assessing workgroup norms for civility: The development of the Civility Norms Questionnaire-Brief. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 27(4), 407-420.

“Please describe how each of the below statement reflects behaviour in your organisation over the past three months”		1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
N1	Rude behavior is not accepted by my coworkers					
N2	Angry outbursts are not tolerated by anyone in my unit/workgroup					
N3	Respectful treatment is the norm in your unit/workgroup					
N4	Your coworkers make sure everyone in your unit/workgroup is treated with respect					

### Role Overload

Cousins, R., Mackay, C. J., Clarke, S. D., Kelly, C., Kelly, P. J., & McCaig, R. H. (2004). ‘Management standards’ work-related stress in the UK: Practical development. *Work & Stress*, 18(2), 113-136.

“Please rate on the scale below how much you agree with the following statements”		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
RO1	I am pressured to work long hours							
RO2	I have unachievable deadlines							
RO3	I have to work very fast							
RO4	I have to work very intensively							



RO5	I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do
RO6	Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine
RO7	I am unable to take sufficient breaks
RO8	I have unrealistic time pressures

## Appendix D

Exploratory factor analyses for all measures.

### Ethical leadership

Table 1  
*Factor loadings and communalities for the ethical leadership scale*

Item	Factor 1	h <sup>2</sup>
Conducts his/her personal life in an ethical manner	<b>.65</b>	.43
Defines success not just by the results by also the way that they are obtained	<b>.71</b>	.58
Listens to what employees have to say	<b>.87</b>	.76
Disciplines employees who violate ethical standards	<b>.53</b>	.29
Makes fair and balanced decisions	<b>.89</b>	.80
Can be trusted	<b>.80</b>	.64
Discusses business ethics or values with employees	<b>.53</b>	.28
Sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics	<b>.82</b>	.67
Has the best interests of employees in mind	<b>.83</b>	.69
When making decisions asks “what is the right thing to do”	<b>.84</b>	.70
Eigenvalue	5.82	
Percent of variance (after extraction)	58.20%	

### Transformational Leadership

Table 2  
*Factor loadings and communalities for the Transformational leadership Scale*

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	h <sup>2</sup>
TL1	<b>.75</b>	-.09	.24	.74
TL2	<b>.50</b>	.10	.24	.57
TL3	<b>.67</b>	.10	.16	.74
TL4	.11	.11	.34	.26
TL5	.03	-.10	<b>.89</b>	.71
TL6	-.02	.22	<b>.67</b>	.66
TL7	.36	.09	<b>.43</b>	.60
TL8	.03	.21	<b>.57</b>	.57
TL9	-.02	<b>.77</b>	.09	.68
TL10	-.09	<b>.96</b>	.06	.70
TL11	.22	<b>.64</b>	.07	.74
TL12	.10	<b>.74</b>	-.04	.62
TL13	.33	<b>.45</b>	.15	.69
TL14	.37	<b>.62</b>	.03	.63
TL15	<b>.57</b>	.26	.01	.60
TL16	<b>.47</b>	.11	.23	.53
TL17	<b>.61</b>	.05	.05	.47
TL18	<b>.81</b>	-.02	-.06	.57
TL19	<b>.82</b>	.04	-.10	.62
TL20	<b>.94</b>	-.05	-.01	.81
Eigenvalue	10.89	.93	.68	

Percent of variance (after extraction)	54.44%	4.62%	3.34%
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Note. item content could not be included due to copyright restrictions

Table 3  
*Factor loadings and communalities for the Transformational leadership MLQ after removing item 4*

Item	Factor 1	h <sup>2</sup>
TL1	<b>.82</b>	.73
TL2	<b>.75</b>	.57
TL3	<b>.85</b>	.74
TL5	<b>.66</b>	.43
TL6	<b>.71</b>	.54
TL7	<b>.76</b>	.57
TL8	<b>.69</b>	.50
TL9	<b>.74</b>	.65
TL10	<b>.72</b>	.66
TL11	<b>.82</b>	.72
TL12	<b>.68</b>	.53
TL13	<b>.82</b>	.69
TL14	<b>.78</b>	.61
TL15	<b>.77</b>	.59
TL16	<b>.73</b>	.53
TL17	<b>.66</b>	.46
TL18	<b>.69</b>	.57
TL19	<b>.72</b>	.60
TL20	<b>.83</b>	.80
Eigenvalue	10.63	
Percent of variance (after extraction)	55.93%	

Note. item content could not be included due to copyright restrictions

### **Workplace relational civility: Part A (me with others)**

Table 4  
*Factor loadings and communalities part A of the Relational Civility Scale (me with others)*

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	h <sup>2</sup>
I was able to express my values and beliefs calmly to others	-.00	<b>.71</b>	-.05	.55
I was able to express my point of view without being disrespectful toward others	.11	<b>.73</b>	.04	.59
I respected the opinions of others	.26	.33	-.14	.36
I communicated my disagreement with others without being aggressive	-.07	<b>.79</b>	-.01	.58
I was polite toward others	.11	-.09	<b>-.76</b>	.60
I was generally kind toward others	-.75	-.01	<b>-.88</b>	.70
I always behaved mannerly toward others	.02	.26	<b>-.65</b>	.69

I made comments that valued others	<b>.49</b>	.27	-.11	.54
I was interested in the emotional condition of others	<b>.87</b>	-.06	.08	.65
I was sensitive about the difficulties of others	<b>.87</b>	-.09	.03	.66
I realized the effect of my words on others	<b>.52</b>	.22	-.05	.46
I was attentive to the needs of others	<b>.76</b>	.03	-.10	.68
I easily recognized the feelings of others	<b>.55</b>	.07	-.14	.46
Eigenvalue	5.60	1.23	.72	
Percent of variance (after extraction)	43.03%	9.47%	5.51%	

Table 5

*Factor loadings and communalities part A of the Relational Civility Scale (me with others) after removing item 3*

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	h2
I was able to express my values and beliefs calmly to others	-.01	<b>.75</b>	-.03	.55
I was able to express my point of view without being disrespectful toward others	.15	<b>.64</b>	-.01	.59
I communicated my disagreement with others without being aggressive	-.06	<b>.77</b>	-.01	.58
I was polite toward others	.11	-.09	<b>-.77</b>	.60
I was generally kind toward others	-.07	-.04	<b>-.87</b>	.70
I always behaved mannerly toward others	.03	.26	<b>-.65</b>	.69
I made comments that valued others	<b>.51</b>	.29	-.10	.54
I was interested in the emotional condition of others	<b>.87</b>	-.05	.08	.65
I was sensitive about the difficulties of others	<b>.86</b>	-.12	.02	.66
I realized the effect of my words on others	<b>.53</b>	.21	-.05	.46
I was attentive to the needs of others	<b>.76</b>	.04	-.91	.68
I easily recognized the feelings of others	<b>.56</b>	.09	-.14	.46
Eigenvalue	5.27	1.22	.70	
Percent of variance (after extraction)	43.89%	10.20%	5.87%	

### **Workplace relational civility: Part B (others with me)**

Table 6

*Factor loadings and communalities part B of the Relational Civility Scale (others with me)*

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	h2
Others were able to express my values and beliefs calmly to others	<b>.80</b>	.08	.55
Others were able to express my point of view without being disrespectful toward others	<b>.83</b>	.12	.57
Others respected my opinions	<b>.65</b>	-.06	.49
Others communicated their disagreement with me without being aggressive	<b>.55</b>	-.15	.44
Others were polite toward me	<b>.69</b>	-.01	.58
Others were generally kind toward me	<b>.63</b>	-.15	.55
Others always behaved mannerly toward me	<b>.65</b>	-.09	.52

Others made comments that valued me	.31	<b>-.54</b>	.62
Others were interested in my emotional condition	-.12	<b>-.96</b>	.78
Others were sensitive about my difficulties	-.03	<b>-.88</b>	.73
Others realized the effect of their words on me	.24	<b>-.67</b>	.72
Others were attentive to my needs	.23	<b>-.69</b>	.76
Others recognized my feelings	.05	<b>-.85</b>	.79
Eigenvalue	7.19	.90	
Percent of variance (after extraction)	55.31%	6.91%	

### **Perceived norms for respect scale**

Table 7

*Factor loadings and communalities for perceived norms for respect scale*

Item	Factor 1	h <sup>2</sup>
Rude behavior is not accepted by my coworkers	<b>.82</b>	.67
Angry outbursts are not tolerated by anyone in my unit/workgroup	<b>.76</b>	.58
Respectful treatment is the norm in your unit/workgroup	<b>.84</b>	.70
Your coworkers make sure everyone in your unit/workgroup is treated with respect	<b>.77</b>	.60
Eigenvalue	2.55	
Percent of variance (after extraction)	63.67%	

### **Role overload scale**

Table 8

*Factor loadings and communalities for role overload scale*

Item	Factor 1	h <sup>2</sup>
I am pressured to work long hours	<b>.68</b>	.54
I have unachievable deadlines	<b>.82</b>	.65
I have to work very fast	-.03	.92
I have to work very intensively	.07	.72
I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do	<b>.76</b>	.57
Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	<b>.60</b>	.39
I am unable to take sufficient breaks	<b>.74</b>	.47
I have unrealistic time pressures	<b>.78</b>	.72
Eigenvalue	4.21	
Percent of variance (after extraction)	52.67%	

Table 9

*Factor loadings and communalities for role overload scale after removing item 3 and 4*

Item	Factor 1	h <sup>2</sup>
I am pressured to work long hours	<b>.68</b>	.53
I have unachievable deadlines	<b>.82</b>	.65

I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do	<b>.76</b>	.55
Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	<b>.60</b>	.39
I am unable to take sufficient breaks	<b>.74</b>	.47
I have unrealistic time pressures	<b>.78</b>	.69
Eigenvalue	3.27	
Percent of variance (after extraction)	54.56%	